

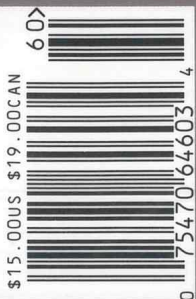
Ceramics

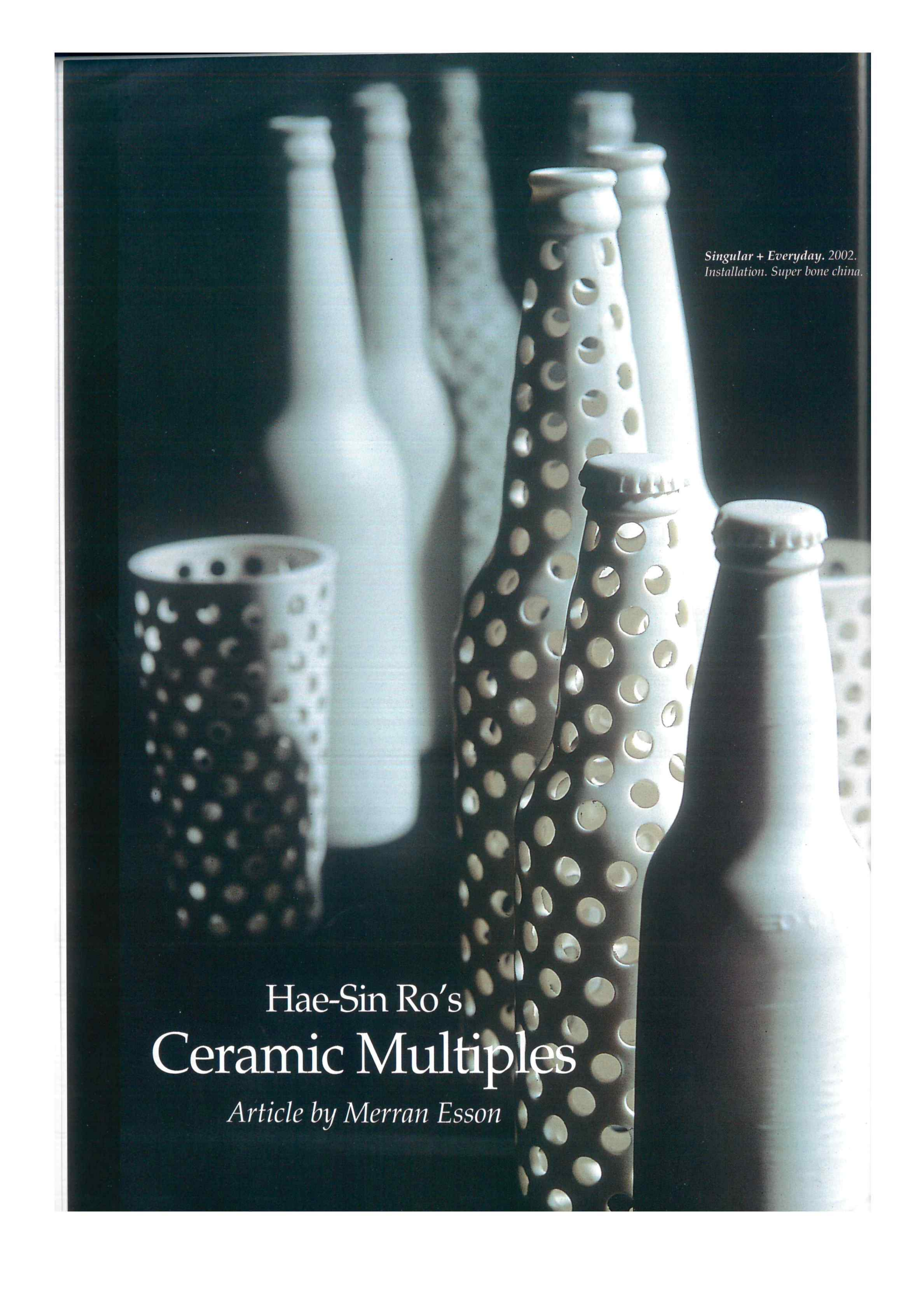
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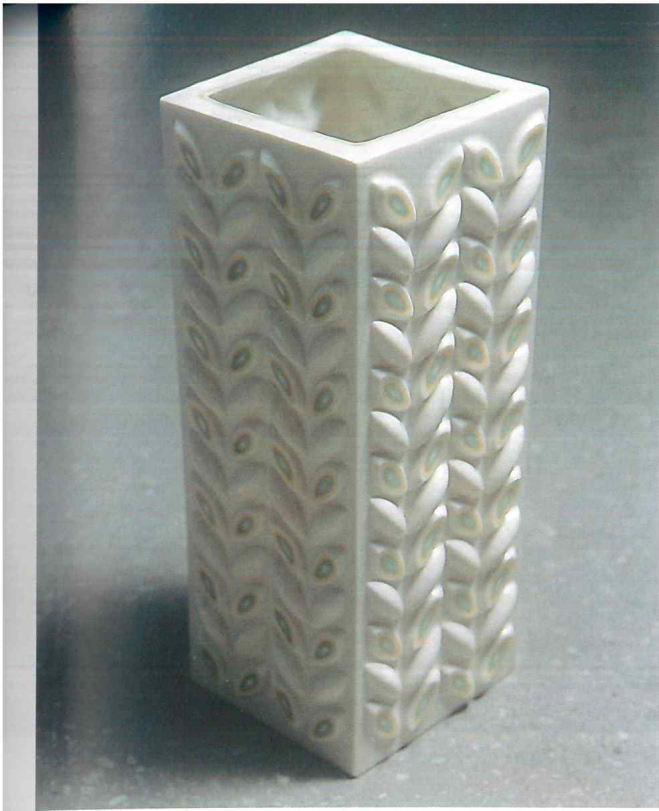




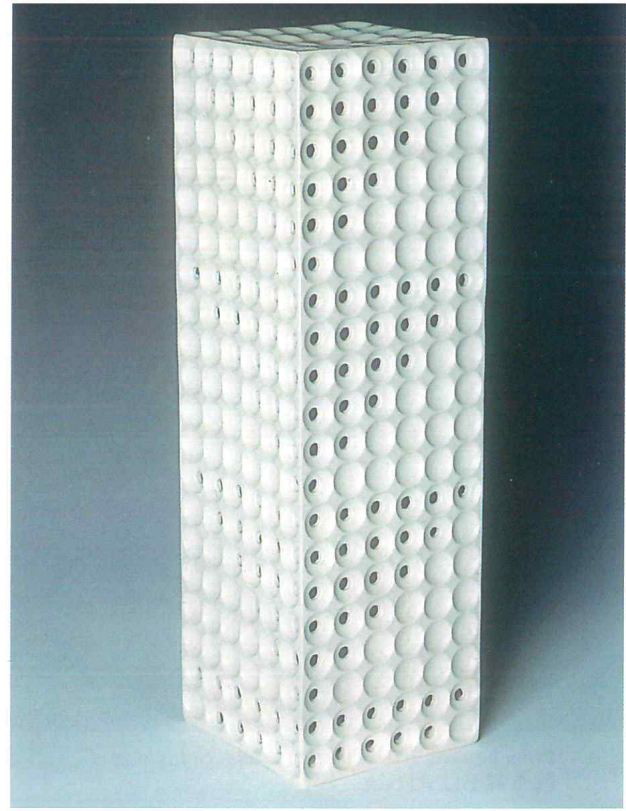
*Singular + Everyday, 2002.
Installation. Super bone china.*

Hae-Sin Ro's
Ceramic Multiples

Article by Merran Esson



Vessel. 2001. Porcelain, stain, clear glaze. 55 x 25 x 25 cm.



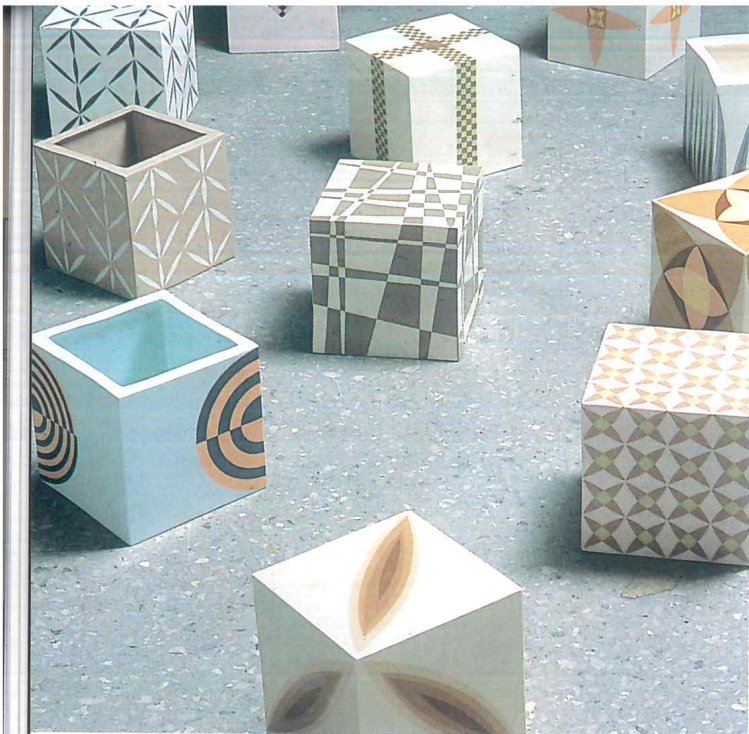
Repetition. 1997. Super bone china. 60 x 20 x 20 cm.

WHEN PROFESSOR HAE-SIN RO, FROM THE CERAMICS department at Kongju National University in Korea, arrived in Sydney in 2004, almost a year ago, she was searching for an opportunity to enjoy a quieter life for a year. It was a chance to take some private time for herself and explore both new work and new surroundings. She had been invited as an exchange professor and as an artist-in-residence, shared between the National Art School and The College of Fine Arts, University New South Wales. She was eager to come to Australia because it seemed to her a country where the pace of life was slower. The National Art School was probably a perfect starting point, situated in the old Sydney gaol in inner city Darlinghurst. This was a convict-built prison with a high perimeter wall and is now an art school, providing a secluded environment for artists and education. This was Ro's studio for the first six months. The peaceful campus with its impressive sandstone architecture was the beginning of a time that would give her an opportunity to reflect and a chance to focus and explore new ideas.

Hae-Sin Ro's interest lies in mould-making and slipcasting and these techniques give her the opportunity to work with groups of individual but similar pieces, selecting her final objects into multiples and still life series. Slipcasting is a technique closely associated to mass production and often aligned to function. In her practice neither is important. She does, however, extend the concept of the ceramic multiple, making repeated casts of objects of a similar form and size and then developing a series of work either by altering

the form or the surface. In her work *Singular + Everyday* (2002), she explores her thoughts about the singular object and its everyday usage. In this work she has slipcast a familiar Korean beer bottle and juxtaposed this with cylinders, plates and spheres to create a still life installation that explores function as subject, not purpose. Referencing the everyday purpose of these familiar objects, she has focused her thinking to include some bottles which are open and empty, and some which still have their lids on, but are pierced. Her deliberate piercing of the forms consolidates her thoughts on utility and function and also links to earlier work which explores pattern and light. Hae-Sin Ro is interested in pattern; this is something she has been investigating in most of her studio practice. The patterns move from being purely textural as seen in *Repetition* (1997) and *Vessel* (2001) to surface colours in her more recent work *From Square* (2002) and the work she has been developing in Sydney.

Her forms are geometric and, by keeping them minimal, the work is able to interact with light. She refers to the textured surfaces of her earlier work *Repetition* which relied on the changing light throughout the day to move across the work and leave memories of shadow patterns. These shadow patterns have more recently become images ingrained in the surface of her work, created by layers of coloured slip giving the illusion of shadows. This graphic illusion is achieved by brushing or cutting away the first and second layers of coloured slip, to reveal a variety of underlying colours. Of course, these processes intentionally slow her production, allowing time for refinement.



From Square. 2002. Porcelain, stain, clear glaze.
Each 12 x 12 x 12 cm.

So what sustains this interest in a practice, where the artist is unaware of time passing, and where work slowly takes form? Certainly obsession, and a meticulous approach to her craft. The work is well designed and certainly well made; it speaks of the maker's quiet strength and determined focus and one has the sense that she is enjoying the space and time that this year has given her. Porcelain and bone china are the materials that Ro uses in her work. Bone china for its pure whiteness, and porcelain when she is staining the material and working with colour.

In exploring colour in Australia, she is aware of the colours in her palette. Not because the materials are different, but because colour in Australia is also different. The defined seasons in Korea bring with them a dramatic change in colour in the landscape, especially reds. In Australia our seasons are much less defined and so the colour change is less dramatic. Sebastian Blackie when writing of the light in Australia states "The country's intense light bleaches the mid-distance producing a different kind of perspective".¹ It is this intensity of light bleaching out the colour that Hae-Sin Ro is referring to.

How might her time in Australia affect her future work? She speaks as though it is this aspect – Australian landscape with its different colour palette, which may hold the key to future developments in the work. This change in palette, and her thoughts about an unhurried approach to life, has also caused her to reflect on the precise geometric forms in this body of work. Already she is thinking about the type of work she will produce on her return to Korea and the development of new forms, evocative of her Australian experience. As any artist who moves countries and culture for a defined period of time, she has been



Singular + Everyday. 2002. Porcelain, stain, clear glaze.

challenged by the change in local materials. Her initial tests with porcelain slip when she first arrived were a learning process in finding a pureness in the new materials. She embarked on an extensive testing program with colour, producing a gentle palette of coloured discs which now fill the shelves of her studio and which she constantly moves and re-positions to set up interesting combinations before commencing each new piece. Working in this way, perfecting each piece and returning to it again to achieve refinement, she produces a sophisticated surface quality that only such care and time can provide.

As she completes her 12 months in Australia, she is working in the Ceramics Department at the College of Fine Arts. Her studio is quite open; she shares her space with staff and postgraduate students and has a window that looks out on a leafy and shaded quiet Paddington street. Hae-Sin Ro talks about the rushed pace of life in the cities of Korea, but I suspect that outside the walls of the National Art School and away from the quietness of her Paddington studio, a similar frantic pace is also here in Australia's biggest city. Perhaps we are not necessarily a culture that operates at such different pace; it is just that those of us who spend our days behind those solid walls are protected just a little.

REFERENCE:

1. Blackie, Sebastian. *Dear Mr Leach*. A & C Black, London, (2004).

Merran Esson is a ceramic artist and a lecturer in the ceramics department at The National Art School in Sydney. Professor Hae-Sin Ro's work will be on exhibition at the COFA Exhibition/Performance Spaces at UNSW, cnr. Oxford Street and Greens Road, Paddington. June 20-24, 2005.